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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the combined fourth to eighth periodic reports of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines*

1. The Committee considered the combined fourth to eighth periodic reports of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (CEDAW/C/VCT/4-8) at its 1323rd and 1324th meetings, on 20 July 2015 (see CEDAW/C/SR.1323 and 1324). The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/VCT/Q/4-8/Add.1 and the responses of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are contained in CEDAW/C/VCT/Q/4-8/Add.2.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates that the State party submitted its combined fourth to eighth periodic reports, albeit with a protracted delay. It also appreciates the State party's written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group and welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party on its delegation, which was represented by the Director of the Social Development Department within the Ministry of National Mobilization, Social Development, Family, Gender Affairs, Persons with Disabilities and Youth, Merissa Finch Burke, and also included a consultant. The Committee appreciates the constructive dialogue that took place between the delegation and the Committee, while noting that some questions were not fully answered.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since its consideration in 1997 of the State party's combined initial to third periodic reports (CEDAW/C/STV/1-3 and Add.1) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following legislation:

* Adopted by the Committee at its sixty-first session (6-24 July 2015).

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(a) Domestic Violence Act of 2015, which prohibits domestic violence and provides enhanced protection for women and girls;

(b) Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act of 2009;

(c) Protection of Employment Act of 2004, which specifically prohibits an employer from terminating the services of an employee on various grounds, including sex, marital status, pregnancy, reasonable absence from work due to family emergencies or responsibilities or absence from work during maternity leave.

5. The Committee welcomes the adoption in 2015 of a national action plan on gender-based violence, which provides for a comprehensive policy framework to prevent and combat gender-based violence in the State party.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous reports, the State party has ratified or acceded to the following instruments:

(a) Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, in 2011;

(b) United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, in 2010;

(c) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto, in 2010;

(d) International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, in 2010;

(e) Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, in 2005;

(f) 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, in 1999, and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, in 2003;

(g) Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, in 2002;

(h) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in 2001.

C. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

House of Assembly

7. **The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see the statement by the Committee on its relationship with parliamentarians, adopted at the forty-fifth session, in 2010). It invites the House of Assembly, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the next reporting period under the Convention.**

Status of the Convention

8. The Committee is concerned that, although it was ratified in 1981, the Convention has not yet been fully incorporated into the national legal order by

means of separate national legislation or court judgements, so that it can be applied directly in the national courts.

9. **The Committee calls upon the State party to proceed without delay with the full incorporation of the Convention into its national legal order.**

Constitutional framework and discriminatory laws

10. The Committee acknowledges that article 13 of the Constitution (1979) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, but is concerned that there is no specific provision establishing that men and women have equal rights and notes with regret that the 2009 Constitution bill, which included provisions for equal rights and the same legal status for women and men as well as the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex, was rejected by a referendum held on 25 November 2009. The Committee notes with concern the absence of a definition of discrimination against women in line with that of the Convention as well as of the principle of equality of women and men in the State party's legislation. It is further concerned that there is no law on gender equality or comprehensive anti-discriminatory legislation that would incorporate the principle of equality of women and men and define and prohibit all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex or gender, including direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, in line with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention.

11. **The Committee recommends that the State party adopt, without delay, new legislation that fully incorporates the principle of equality of women and men as well as a definition and prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex and gender in the public and private spheres, in line with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention.**

12. The Committee notes with satisfaction that the State party has adopted some anti-discriminatory legislation, but notes with concern that sex-discriminatory provisions continue to exist in its legislation, including in the Criminal Code, the Marriage Act, the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act and the Citizenship Act (1984).

13. **Recalling its previous recommendation (see A/52/38/Rev.1, para. 142), the Committee recommends that the State party review its existing legislation by adopting a clear time frame and targets in relation to the law reform process and amend or repeal all discriminatory provisions, including in the laws mentioned above, to ensure their compatibility with the principle of equality and non-discrimination as enshrined in the Convention.**

National machinery for the advancement of women

14. The Committee regards as positive the fact that the Gender Affairs Division, which has been reoriented to focus on gender mainstreaming and gender policy development in all State departments, is currently seeking to promote gender mainstreaming across all government sectors and is collaborating with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning to design and implement a gender-responsive budgeting approach to facilitate the process. The Committee notes that the Division is responsible for the development of a multisectoral national gender policy, but is concerned about the low ranking of the national machinery for the advancement of

women in the institutional structure of the State party and the scarce human, technical and financial resources allocated to it.

15. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen the authority and visibility of the Gender Affairs Division in the State party's institutional structure and provide it with adequate human, financial and technical resources to coordinate and work effectively for the integration of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes across all sectors and levels of government;**

(b) **Consolidate the gender mainstreaming activities by establishing a multisectoral national gender policy without delay and set up a timeline for rolling out the policy;**

(c) **Implement a gender-responsive-budgeting approach.**

Temporary special measures

16. The Committee notes that the State party, in its replies to the list of issues and questions, enumerated legislative and administrative measures to improve the situation of women and girls in various sectors, but that the measures do not correspond to temporary special measures as called for under article 4 (1) of the Convention and as further elaborated in the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 on the subject. This suggests that there remains a lack of understanding on the part of the State party as to the concept of temporary special measures and their use for promoting de facto equality. In that context, the Committee regrets the statement in the State party's report that "no quotas have been instituted for the inclusion of women in public office or in other areas".

17. **The Committee recommends that the State party familiarize all relevant State officials and policymakers with the concept and use of temporary special measures and adopt and implement such measures to promote substantive equality of women and men, in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25, in all areas of the Convention in which women are underrepresented or disadvantaged. Such measures could include, for example, gender quotas for political parties' electoral lists.**

Stereotypes and harmful practices

18. The Committee acknowledges the importance in daily life of the culture and traditions of the State party and notes that gender sensitivity training and awareness-raising activities have been conducted in schools and through radio programmes and workshops to reach out to communities. The Committee is nevertheless concerned at the persistence of discriminatory stereotypes, negative traditional values and patriarchal attitudes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in society and in the family that overemphasize women's roles as mothers and housewives, thereby preventing them from actively participating in all areas of political and economic life covered by the Convention.

19. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Put in place, without delay, a comprehensive strategy to modify or eliminate patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes that discriminate against**

women. The strategy should include education and awareness-raising campaigns targeting women and men at all levels of society, including community and religious leaders, and focus particular attention on recognizing the value and dignity of women and their empowerment to participate in decision-making processes in the community and in society at large. Civil society organizations and the mass media should be engaged in the implementation of the strategy;

(b) **Adequately integrate the principles of non-discrimination and equality of women and men into educational policies, the national core curriculum and related documents, as well as into basic and continuing education for teachers and health-care professionals and other service providers;**

(c) **Use innovative measures that target children and parents to strengthen their understanding of the principle of equality of women and men and work through the educational system, both formal and informal, as well as with the mass media, to enhance positive and non-stereotypical portrayals of women;**

(d) **Monitor and review all measures taken to regularly assess their impact and take appropriate remedial action.**

Violence against women

20. The Committee welcomes the adoption in April 2015 of the Domestic Violence Act, which broadens the definition of domestic violence by including not only physical violence but also sexual, psychological and economic violence. The Committee also notes with appreciation the adoption in 2015 of an interministerial national action plan on gender-based violence. However, the Committee notes:

(a) That a violation of the Domestic Violence Act is only a civil offence and that only the breach of a protection or occupation order is considered a criminal offence; in addition, the measures in place to enforce such orders are weak and the penalties applied to breaches of the orders are lenient;

(b) That no provisions in the Criminal Code and/or the Domestic Violence Act explicitly criminalize marital rape;

(c) That women in same-sex relationships are excluded from the categories of persons who can apply for protection under the Domestic Violence Act, as acknowledged by the State party;

(d) That a financial burden is imposed on victims by the need to file affidavits, requiring the services of a lawyer, which is not provided for by the Domestic Violence Act;

(e) That the legal definition of rape is narrow, given that it does not cover invasive acts such as penetration with other body parts or objects. Such acts currently fall under the offence of indecent assault in the Criminal Code and carry much lighter penalties;

(f) That police attitudes sometimes actively discourage women who are victims of violence from pursuing their complaint, given that law enforcement officers treat them with contempt and hostility;

(g) That data disaggregated by sex, age, type of offence and relationship between the perpetrator and the victim are lacking on all the forms of violence covered by the Domestic Violence Act.

21. **The Committee urges the State party:**

(a) **To amend the Criminal Code and/or the Domestic Violence Act to criminalize all acts of domestic violence covered by the Act and explicitly criminalize marital rape;**

(b) **To ensure that no woman is excluded from seeking and obtaining protection under the Domestic Violence Act on the basis of the type of relationship in which she is engaged;**

(c) **To ensure that women who are victims of violence and who wish to apply for protection under the Domestic Violence Act are not denied access to protection because of financial and administrative obstacles;**

(d) **To widen the definition of rape to include other forms of penetration, or establish new offences to cover such conduct, and to consider using the Caribbean Community model legislation on sexual harassment to do so;**

(e) **To provide sufficient technical, human and financial resources for the effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act and the National Action Plan on Gender-based Violence and enhance cooperation with civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders in that regard;**

(f) **To develop protocols to support response, management and referral relating to domestic violence cases and provide continuous training to the judiciary and law enforcement officers on gender-sensitive procedures to deal with women who are victims of violence;**

(g) **To encourage women to report incidents of sexual and domestic violence by destigmatizing victims and raising awareness about the grave and serious nature of such acts;**

(h) **To develop protocols for the collection of information by the police, justice officials and health workers on domestic and other types of violence against women to systematize and institutionalize the collection, analysis and dissemination of comprehensive data on domestic violence that are disaggregated by age, sex, nationality, ethnic group, type of violence and relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.**

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

22. The Committee notes the positive steps taken by the State party to tackle trafficking in human beings, in particular women and girls, including the enactment in 2011 of an act on the prevention of trafficking in persons, the establishment of an anti-trafficking in persons unit within the police and the creation of a crisis centre for victims. The Committee is concerned, however, about reports of cases of sexual abuse of children in the family by persons who pay the family to be silent and not report the incidents; this leads to sexual exploitation of children, in particular girls, and effectively places them in a situation of forced prostitution. The Committee notes with concern that only three cases of human trafficking were investigated in 2014 and five in 2013, none of which resulted in prosecution. Furthermore, the

Committee is concerned about the lack of alternative employment opportunities for women and girls who wish to leave prostitution.

23. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen measures to prevent and respond effectively to incidents of transnational and internal trafficking for sexual abuse and exploitation, especially of girls under 18 years of age, including through awareness-raising initiatives, the prosecution and punishment of offenders and the establishment of specific support and rehabilitation programmes for victims;**

(b) **Systematically gather and analyse sex-disaggregated data and information on trafficking and sexual exploitation, including exploitation of children in the family by outsiders and sex tourism;**

(c) **Strengthen measures aimed at tackling the root causes of trafficking of women and girls, such as poverty and high unemployment, which may also drive them into prostitution;**

(d) **Enhance support services for victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation, including alternative employment opportunities, to facilitate the reintegration into society of women and girls who wish to leave prostitution.**

Participation in political and public life

24. The Committee notes that women currently constitute 40 per cent of the workforce in civil service institutions and that high-level public positions, including Attorney General, Accountant General, Clerk of the House of Assembly, Registrar of the Supreme Court and President of the Family Court, are held by women and that 50 per cent of the judges of the High Court and 50 per cent of magistrates are women. The Committee remains concerned, however, about the stark underrepresentation of women at the highest levels of decision-making, noting that they represent only 13 per cent of parliamentarians and 9.1 per cent of ministers. The Committee is concerned that no quota system has been introduced to promote the participation of women in political and public life as a result of the rejection by referendum in 2009 of the proposal to include in the Constitution a section that would have provided for the introduction of a quota of 30 per cent of women candidates on electoral lists of political parties. It is also concerned that the measures taken by the State party to support women candidates for elected positions remain insufficient and that there are no targeted training and mentoring programmes on leadership and negotiation skills for such women. The Committee is further concerned about the barriers faced by women who seek public office, including negative cultural attitudes and gender stereotypes.

25. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt, as a matter of priority, targeted measures, including training, capacity-building, gender-sensitive recruitment and temporary special measures, to increase the percentage of women in appointed senior positions, the Government, the public service and the foreign service, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 23 on women in political and public life;**

(b) **Amend the electoral law to allow for reserving at least 30 per cent of parliamentary seats for women, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations Nos. 23 and 25;**

(c) **Provide training for women, including in the Grenadines, on leadership skills, campaigning and constituency-building to prepare them as candidates and for positions in political life and the various areas of public administration;**

(d) **Conduct awareness-raising campaigns for politicians, journalists, teachers and community leaders, especially men, to enhance the understanding that the full, equal, free and democratic participation of women on an equal basis with men in political and public life is a requirement for the full implementation of the Convention;**

(e) **Address cultural barriers that prevent women from moving into decision-making positions and ensure equal representation of women and men in such positions.**

Nationality

26. The Committee notes with satisfaction that, under the law of the State party, women have the same rights as men to acquire, change or retain nationality. It also acknowledges that legislative provisions extend the same rights to women and men to pass on their nationality to their children and provide for dual citizenship for both sexes equally. The Committee is concerned, however, about information stating that a married woman's ability to pass her nationality on to her husband is subject to the discretion of the responsible government minister, who can refuse such transmission of nationality "on reasonable grounds".

27. **The Committee recommends that the State party amend its relevant legislation to grant women citizens equal rights with men regarding the transmission of their nationality to their foreign spouses.**

Education

28. The Committee commends the State party for achieving universal access to primary and secondary education. It also welcomes the development of a health and family life education curriculum and a programme aimed at enabling pregnant adolescent girls to pursue their education through the provision of day-care services, payment of school fees and books as well as transportation ("Teen Mothers Returning to School" programme). However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The high rate of teenage pregnancy (nearly 50 per cent of women/girls give birth for the first time between 15 and 19 years of age), which results in high dropout rates, in addition to the lack of information on whether the Health and Family Life Education Curriculum is offered in an age-appropriate manner at all levels of education and includes a gender perspective and education on responsible sexual behaviour;

(b) The limited coverage and the lack of public awareness of the programme designed to facilitate the return of adolescent mothers to school and the lack of sex-disaggregated data to carry out an impact assessment;

(c) The lack of a comprehensive and integrated strategy to address ideological and structural barriers that discourage girls from participating in non-traditional academic and technical-vocational subjects.

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Consider means of reducing unwanted teenage pregnancies by continuing to promote education in sexual and reproductive health and rights and responsible sexual behaviour for girls and boys, ensuring that it is age appropriate and offered at all levels of education;**

(b) **Strengthen efforts to retain girls in school and facilitate the reintegration of pregnant girls and young mothers into school by providing support services, such as counselling in parenting skills, appropriate sexual and reproductive health services and adequate childcare facilities, as well as by extending the coverage and increasing the accessibility and availability of the "Teen Mothers Returning to School" programme;**

(c) **Eliminate traditional stereotypes and structural barriers that may deter girls from enrolling in traditionally male fields of study, such as science and technology, and step up efforts to provide girls with career counselling on non-traditional career paths and alternatives outside formal education, including non-stereotypical vocational training.**

Employment

30. The Committee acknowledges the adoption of legislative and other measures by the State party to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment and ensure that women and men have equal access to the labour market, including by establishing early childhood facilities at the community level and improving public transportation. The Committee notes with concern, however, that in 2013 the labour force participation rate was 55.7 per cent for women and 78.4 per cent for men. While noting the efforts by the State party to increase female participation in non-traditional sectors of the economy, the Committee remains concerned about the clear horizontal segregation of the labour market and the concentration of women in low-income occupational categories.

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Systematically collect sex-disaggregated data on labour market participation and analyse and develop effective responses to the continuing lack of correlation between the high level of education attained by women and their low level of engagement in the workforce;**

(b) **Adopt and implement policies, with time-bound targets and indicators, to reverse cultural patterns and transform traditional gender stereotypes and norms of sex-appropriate roles in the society transmitted through schooling and parenting in order to eliminate occupational segregation and achieve substantive equality of women and men in the labour market, including in traditionally male fields, through intensified technical and vocational training for women in those areas.**

32. The Committee notes with concern that the Equal Pay Act is not in conformity with the principle of equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value.

33. **The Committee recommends that the State party amend section 3 (1) of the Equal Pay Act to ensure equal remuneration for women and men for work of equal value.**

34. The Committee is concerned about information provided by the State party that there is anecdotal evidence that some women who seek employment are requested to provide sexual favours in exchange for being hired. It is also concerned that the existing national legislation does not cover all aspects of sexual harassment and that the Domestic Violence Act addresses harassment only in the private sphere, thereby failing to address the scope of sexual harassment in the workplace.

35. **The Committee recommends that the State party adopt legislation that specifically criminalizes sexual harassment in all settings, including in the workplace, and covers both soliciting sexual favours for advancement and working environments hostile to women.**

Health

36. The Committee notes with appreciation the awareness-raising activities carried out by the National Family Planning Coordinator in secondary schools, technical institutions and the Community College to address issues such as responsible sexual behaviour, adolescent pregnancy, family planning services, including contraceptives, and sexually transmitted diseases. The Committee nevertheless remains concerned about information that traditional attitudes and cultural norms hamper access to contraceptives, including emergency contraceptives, because clinic nurses frequently consider that it is not appropriate for schoolgirls to be sexually active and either refuse to supply contraceptives or inform their mothers about their sexual activity.

37. **In line with article 12 of the Convention and its general recommendation No. 24 on women and health, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure free and adequate access to sexual and reproductive health services, in particular to modern contraceptive methods, for all women and girls, including those living on the outer islands, and strengthen age-appropriate school-based education on sexual and reproductive health and rights for adolescent girls and boys through the Health and Family Life Education Curriculum;**

(b) **Review policies and protocols governing the provision of sexual and reproductive health services to women and girls and ensure their effective implementation by developing and conducting awareness-raising and training programmes for health-care providers with a view to addressing traditional attitudes and overcoming cultural barriers that constrain access to family planning services, including contraceptives;**

(c) **Provide free and confidential family planning services at the community level, including in the Grenadines, and educate women and girls and men and boys on responsible sexual behaviour and the prevention of early and unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.**

38. The Committee notes that abortion is illegal except in cases of rape, incest, risk to the life or physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or severe foetal impairment, as stipulated in section 149 of the Criminal Code. The Committee

remains concerned, however, at information indicating that, in practice, abortion is not available to victims of rape or incest, nor to women whose life is threatened by the pregnancy. It also notes with concern the information that a proper medical procedure is extremely expensive and therefore not an option for many women, who resort to backstreet abortions. It further notes with concern that official data show that the maternal mortality ratio is 48 births per 100,000 live births, reportedly owing in part to unsafe abortions in the State party.

39. **The Committee recommends that the State party remove penalties imposed on women who undergo abortion and ensure that section 149 of the Criminal Code is properly implemented to guarantee access to legal and safe abortion in cases of rape, incest, risk to the life or health of the pregnant woman or severe foetal impairment, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 24 on women and health, and ensure that women and girls have confidential access to adequate post-abortion care, including in cases of backstreet abortions.**

Rural women

40. While welcoming the efforts of the State party to reduce rural poverty by carrying out development and microcredit projects and improving the delivery of basic social services to remote communities, the Committee notes with concern that rural women, including those in isolated communities, which includes indigenous women, are disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment and gender-based violence. Rural women have limited access to health care, education, skills development and training opportunities and to justice and legal aid and have low rates of participation in decision-making. The Committee is also concerned about the high prevalence of female-headed households that also suffer from undue disadvantage and lack of social protection. The Committee is further concerned that rural women are particularly vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters, such as floods, hurricanes and volcanoes, as evidenced by the cases of Hurricane Ivan (2004), Hurricane Tomas (2010) and Tropical Storm Lili (2002), as well as the impact of climate change.

41. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen programmes to address gender-based violence, poverty and unemployment among rural women, in particular those in isolated communities and those that head households, and ensure that they have improved access to health care, social services and the justice system, with targeted programmes for women who suffer multiple discrimination owing to old age and disability, including through greater access to social safety nets;**

(b) **Consider extending social protection schemes, including conditional cash transfers, targeting all vulnerable female-headed households;**

(c) **Ensure that the development and implementation of policies and programmes on disaster preparedness, response to natural disasters and impacts of climate change, as well as other emergencies, are based on a comprehensive gender analysis and mainstream the concerns of women, especially those of rural women, and include them in the design and management of such programmes.**

Family relations and marriage

42. The Committee welcomes the adoption of national legislation that protects the rights of children born out of wedlock, but remains concerned about cultural attitudes and power imbalances within family relations that lead to discriminatory attitudes towards women and girls. The Committee is also concerned that women in de facto unions continue to be disadvantaged before the law, given that they do not enjoy the right to property acquired during the union or financial support from their partners. The Committee further notes with concern the existence of disparities between the child maintenance awards made by the courts to the children of unmarried mothers and those of married mothers.

43. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen its efforts to eliminate stereotypical attitudes regarding the roles of women and men in the family through awareness-raising campaigns;**

(b) **Expedite efforts to undertake reforms, including legislative reforms, with a view to protecting the property rights of women upon the termination of de facto unions and giving them the right to financial support in case of need, in line with general recommendation No. 29 on article 16 of the Convention (economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution);**

(c) **Strengthen its efforts to secure child maintenance payments in adequate amounts, ensuring also that there are no disparities between those accorded to the children of married and unmarried mothers;**

(d) **Consider ratifying the Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions relating to Maintenance Obligations of 1973.**

44. The Committee is concerned that the Marriage Act set the minimum legal age for marriage at 15 years for girls and 16 years for boys.

45. **The Committee urges the State party to expeditiously amend the Marriage Act to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years for girls and boys, in accordance with joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices.**

Data collection and analysis

46. The Committee is concerned at the general lack of data disaggregated by sex, age, race, ethnicity, geographical location and socioeconomic background in the areas covered by the Convention, which are necessary to assess the situation of women for informed and targeted policymaking and to systematically monitor and evaluate progress achieved towards the realization of substantive equality of women in all areas covered by the Convention.

47. **The Committee calls upon the State party to implement systems of collection, analysis and dissemination of data disaggregated by sex, age, disability, race, ethnicity, geographic location and socioeconomic background and to use measurable indicators to assess trends in the situation of women and the progress achieved in the realization of substantive equality of women in all areas covered by the Convention. In that regard, it draws the State party's**

attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 9 on statistical data concerning the situation of women and encourages it to develop gender-sensitive indicators that could be used in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and, when necessary, review of gender equality policies.

Optional Protocol and amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention

48. **The Committee encourages the State party to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.**

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

49. **The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in its efforts to implement the provisions of the Convention.**

Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development framework

50. **The Committee calls for the integration of a gender perspective, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, into all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and into the post-2015 development framework.**

Dissemination

51. **The Committee recalls the obligation of the State party to systematically and continuously implement the provisions of the Convention. It urges the State party to give priority attention to the implementation of the present concluding observations and recommendations between now and the submission of the next periodic report. The Committee therefore requests that the present concluding observations be disseminated in a timely manner, in the official language of the State party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional and local), in particular to the Government, the ministries, the House of Assembly and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation. It encourages the State party to collaborate with all stakeholders concerned, such as employers' associations, trade unions, human rights and women's organizations, universities, research institutions and the media. It recommends that the present concluding observations be disseminated in an appropriate form at the local community level to enable their implementation. In addition, the Committee requests the State party to continue to disseminate the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and relevant jurisprudence, in addition to the Committee's general recommendations, to all stakeholders.**

Technical assistance

52. **The Committee recommends that the State party link the implementation of the Convention to its development efforts and that it avail itself of regional or international technical assistance in that respect.**

Ratification of other treaties

53. **The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments[1] would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to consider ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to which it is not yet a party.**

Follow-up to the concluding observations

54. **The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 17 and 21 (d), (e), (g) and (h) above.**

Preparation of the next report

55. **The Committee invites the State party to submit its ninth periodic report in July 2019.**

56. **The Committee requests the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).**

[1] The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.